

INTEGRATED EDUCATION
FOR BLIND CHILDREN

Jeanne R. Kenmore Pamphlet File

ICEBY 1972 Professional List

INBC/ADH



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

Integration

Pamphlet File
Professional Library
IMRC/APH

INTEGRATED EDUCATION FOR BLIND CHILDREN

THE FIFTH QUINQUENNIAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF
EDUCATORS OF BLIND YOUTH

JULY 1972

Jeanne R. Kenmore, Ph.D.
A.F.O.B. - Paris, France

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

AUG 8 1972

INTEGRATED EDUCATION FOR BLIND CHILDREN

Educating blind children with sighted children is not a new idea. Many countries can point with pride to individual blind persons from past or present generations who have received much, or even all, of their education with the sighted. What is comparatively new is our 20th century concept of carefully planned programs which enable thousands of blind children to attend - schools with the sighted, rather than only rare individuals.

If we take a quick trip around the globe we can get an idea of the extent of today's programs of so-called integrated or open education.

Denmark has about 300 blind children in schools for the - sighted. Swede 200, Portugal 150. There are smaller numbers in Austria, England, France, Holland, Norway and Yugoslavia. New programs will begin this fall in West Germany and Iran. Ceylon has integrated about 160, Israel 70, East Pakistan 15, India 30, Malaysia 100, Thailand 50, the Philippines 500, Taiwan 350. Every year new programs begin in South America, Central America, and in Africa. New Zealand and Australia have integrated several dozen blind children, Canada several hundred, the United States several thousand.

Obviously, blind children have special needs which must be met if they are to receive an education anywhere. It was assumed for nearly 200 years that these needs could be met only in special schools. Now it has been proved around the world that it is possible to provide them through planned programs of integration.

What accounts for this interest in this type of education? Why have integrated programs grown in both developed and developing countries? Partly, there has been the factor of cost. Integrated programs cost less per child in any country. Partly, there has been the factor of standards. It has often been easier to construct good integrated programs than to convince special schools they need to make improvements. Occasionally, there was the factor of numbers. A new type of incubator produced blindness in many thousands of babies. Integrated programs later cared for the hundreds who could not be admitted into the special schools because of space. And in one small country a survey found nearly 1,000 school-age blind children receiving no education at all. It was faster to train itinerant teachers and develop integrated programs than it - would have been to build special schools.

Perhaps the most important reason is that understanding of the individuality of sighted children has fostered flexibility in the general education patterns within many countries, and this has led to recognition of the similarities between sighted and blind children. Educators at many levels from teachers of pre-school children

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

to university professors, have understood how it should be possible to educate the blind with the sighted because of modern conceptions of how all people learn.

How does integration work? There are several keys and all must be available to produce good results.

1) Of prime importance is administrative leadership. It may come from several sources, but it must be available. Directors of special schools for the blind have often recognized the potentialities of many of their students and have arranged integrated programs in cooperation with local schools. This has happened in England, Denmark, Argentina and Sweden, for example. Sometimes the leadership has come from government education officers with insight. This has happened in Portugal, New Zealand, Ceylon, the Philippines, Iran, and the United States. Sometimes the leadership has come from perceptive, creative blind persons. This has happened in Yugoslavia, France, India, and Brazil. Wherever it comes from, the leadership must be effective in order to steer the burgeoning programs.

2) The second key is well trained personnel. There are many patterns of integrated programs but all the variations require highly trained specialists who provide a number of services. These specialists are sometimes called itinerant teachers (because they may travel to two or more schools to help blind children who are enrolled there), resource teachers (because they are a resource for both the regular staff and the blind children), or helping teachers. Whatever the title, these trained specialists are required to do many things.

An interesting example of the training of such specialists can be found in the Philippines. Ten years ago, there was only one small school for about 50 blind pupils in that country. Today that school still exists and the enrollment is larger. In addition, over 500 blind children have been integrated in local schools. One hundred twenty specially qualified teachers travel to these local schools all over the country to give help to the blind children and to their regular teachers. These 120 specialists were fully qualified teachers of the sighted who spent one to two years at a university in Manila studying the education of blind youth. Most of them completed their Master's Degrees. In addition to theoretical lectures, their training included much practical work with blind children and with the preparation of materials for them.

The Philippines is a unique country for it is composed of over 7,000 islands. Many of the special teachers were assigned to jobs which carried them to more than one island. Their particular skills enabled them to provide short seminars for regular classroom teachers who would be having blind children among their pupils to help local education officers understand the reason for integrated education for the blind and what was needed to make it

work and to counsel parents and families of blind youth, and to provide some tutoring to blind pupils.

The integrated program in the Philippines has had many problems during the ten years of its existence, but it remains one of the strongest and best in the world. It has both excellent administrative leadership and well trained personnel.

3) The third key to integration is specialized materials. - How many years schools for the blind, wherever they existed, had only a minimum of tactual and aural material. To integrate blind children, one must have a great deal of material. One country - which realized this immediately upon trial of integration was Denmark. The director of the school for the blind decided to develop his own laboratory for materials so that his staff would have enough for children in both the special school and in the frowning integrated programs. But where to get the staff for such a laboratory and how to find the money to pay their salaries were very large questions. He found it was possible to obtain personnel - from the army from their list of conscientious objectors. Within a short time there were 25 capable young men working out the problems of materials in cooperation with the teachers of blind children.

Other countries have solved the problem of materials in other ways. But there must be materials. Blind children must have the same textbooks, reference materials, and maps as their sighted companions. Braille, recorded materials, raised maps and diagrams and tangible apparatus must be available in great quantities. The United States has found it possible to integrate many thousands of volunteers who write braille or read onto tape. It is estimated there that 75% of all braille materials used by blind persons from primary school through the university are produced by volunteer transcribers. Sweden has another equally effective method of obtaining materials through salaried employees who produce books in both braille and recorded form.

4) The fourth key to integration is independence. Blind children who participate with sighted children will undoubtedly receive a certain amount of help, but the good integrated program must include much instruction for each blind child on physical and psychological independence. The blind child must even learn to function faster in order to compete with the sighted. For example a 6 year old complained to her resource teacher after her first day of integration, "You didn't tell me the other children would turn their pages so fast."

Instruction in mobility has been vital for the integrated child, of course, but he has also had to learn habits of planning for his total functioning, habits of independence in all his activities.

Which system of education is better? If it were possible to choose for your blind child or the children of your country, which pattern would you choose? Special schools or integration?

For many years, at least in the United States, there was considerable argument over that question. Much of it was emotional rather than objective. The conclusion most people eventually reached was that both systems with all their variations were needed, because we have many kinds of blind children in many geographical settings. Furthermore, we know we have both good and bad teachers. A good teacher can teach a blind child well under any type of program. A bad teacher is nearly always a bad teacher no matter where or whom he teaches. Hence, for us at least, the argument ceased to exist as to whether or not we should have only one of those types of educational systems.

It is my privilege as a staff member of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind to travel in many countries. Often I hear the same issues discussed regarding the virtues or faults of integrated education versus special schools. It would seem that all must eventually come to the same conclusion which is, that to serve the world's population of blind children we need many types of programs.

There are some rather large assumptions that we should look at with regard to special schools. 1) It has been assumed in all countries that what was done in special schools was the best possible. It has been too easy for governmental officials to make quick visits to special schools and to assume that so many things about the education of the blind were mysterious that they could not possibly make any judgments concerning the quality of the care or instruction given the children. We know today from many sources, included autobiographies of blind graduates of some of these schools, that there have been many things not good there. 2) A second assumption about special schools was that teachers there gained special understanding and knowledge about blindness. We know now that this is not necessarily true. Often older teachers passed onto to younger teachers poor ways of teaching various subjects, incorrect information about blindness, and peculiar attitudes which hampered each succeeding generation of blind children. 3) A third assumption was that it was a kindness of blind children to shelter them from the world of the sighted while they were young and to prolong their childhood as long as possible. Schools around the world often kept blind people in school until they were well into their 30's.

Integrated education can help correct those old problems of special schools, can contribute to their improvement, for integration must be strongly tied to the special schools. As one type of program flourishes, the other will also. There must be cooperation between the two types of education, united effort to train teachers and to develop specialized materials, common goals toward the education of the public and the preparation of the young blind

adult for an independent life in his community. The pooling of information and skills can result in a continuum of improvement for both special schools and integrated programs.

What really happens to a blind child who attends school with the sighted? A comprehensive answer can be given in two words: that depends. It depends upon the child, his age, his abilities, the school he attends, his special teacher, the country where he lives, the time of year, and many other factors.

Let us choose a 9 year old blind boy of average intelligence who lives in a village in Thailand. He walks to school with his brothers and other children living near him, he uses the sound of their footsteps to guide him, and occasionally he touches the arm of his brother when he is unsure of the terrain. The children do not have to be wary of traffic for few cars pass through this village. .

Since many of the school lessons in his 3rd year class are recited or chanted in unison, he is able to follow the work whether he has the lesson in braille or not. The curriculum includes history, language, arithmetic, singing and sometimes musical instruments, religion, and art. The blind child probably has two books in braille which is quite enough because of the amount of oral work. It is only in art that he occasionally has a difficult time for he cannot understand the drawings or paintings of his friends. But when the class makes objects for the many festivals and holidays, he understands and participates. A special teacher visits him twice a week, teaches him to read braille better, talks with his classroom teacher, and sometimes sees his family. During the rainy season, when the village is isolated, he may not see the itinerant teacher for several weeks, but he has braille lessons to do which were prepared well in advance for him. Four years of education is common in his village, so after one more year of school, the boy will join his father and brothers in their work in the rice fields. He will live approximately the same life he would have lived had he been sighted.

Let us choose another child in another country. A 16 year old boy in Portugal who attends one of the finest lycées for the sighted in the city. The director of the school is extremely proud of the program for the several blind students in his school because he was largely responsible for starting it, and it has been a success. Our 16 year old boy is registered in all the classes his sighted classmates take. In the school building there is a large resource room where he may come when he has a period free for study, when he needs someone to read some material to him, or when he needs explanation of a lesson or a concept he did not understand in his science or mathematics class. There are two teachers in the resource room, and the other blind students come and go as their programs permit. Other teachers stop by to leave a note about some materials which should be put into braille. The geography teacher

brings a raised map he himself has just finished because he wanted to experiment with a new idea about tactual maps for blind students.

In the resource room there are braille writers, typewriters, braille reference materials, and taped lessons one can listen to with earphones. The 10 year old boy has most of the printed materials he needs in braille or on tape. Those he does not have can be read to him in person, sometimes by fellow students, sometimes by one of the resource teachers. Last year he won a prize as one of the best athletes in the school. The education he receives meets most of his special needs, places him in competition with sighted young people of his own age and abilities, and gives him opportunities to develop in the world of the seeing. His education is broader and deeper than what he could have received in any special school for the blind in his country since none is at the standard of this superior lycée for the sighted.

Let us choose one more child. A 10 year old blind girl who is mentally retarded. She attends a school for retarded children in a large rural state in America. There are three blind and many partially seeing children in this school for the mentally retarded. Our 10 year old blind girl is in a class of sighted children of approximately the same mental ability as hers. Her classroom teacher has learned a little about blind retarded children since she had others in her classes before our 10 year old. But she needs many ideas from a specially trained itinerant teacher who visits daily. The 10 year old girl receives an hour of instruction every day from her itinerant teacher but the rest of the day she is with the sighted children. Much of the curriculum is an active one; that is, the children make things, they visit stores or farms, and they learn practical things about daily living. There is a strong program of physical education. There is some reading and some work with numbers which is repeated often and in many ways. The blind child can participate in nearly all of the activities of the class except the handwriting. Then she uses a braille writer. Her regular teacher can help her when she has problems.

Three very different blind children. A normal boy in a remote village in Asia, a gifted boy in an excellent lycée in Portugal, a retarded girl in a school for the retarded in the States. Three blind children integrated successfully with the sighted in very different settings, according to very different needs.

What of the attitudes of sighted classmates, of teachers, of communities? We know that attitudes are taught and learned emotionally.

To change attitudes about blind persons we need to do more than give factual information about the normalcy of the blind. We must give sighted children the opportunities of living, studying, playing with blind children. Research has shown what extremely different attitudes sighted children develop about the blind after having attended school with them.

As for the teachers, three factors contribute dramatically to changes in their attitudes. First, the blind child himself, secondly the assistance from the specialist teacher in terms of materials and ideas, thirdly the feed-back from the success gained in working with the blind child.

Two more comments about attitudes should be added to round out the picture. It is important to remember that all sighted children do not live in an ideal world of helpful attitudes around them, and most of them develop some resilience in dealing with the world in general from their experiences at school. Lastly, it is important to remember that all blind children in a school for the blind do not live in an ideal world of helpful attitudes at school either. There are usually many fellows students and teachers with unhealthy attitudes even in a sheltered environment.

One should not be afraid in an integrated program that there will be unpleasant attitudes. One should assume that there will be and then wade in to correct them, not merely with information but also with understanding, help, and interaction with blind persons themselves.

There have been some failures among integrated programs. Usually these programs have been dropped. Occasionally, they have dragged on for many years doing a great deal of harm because of their inefficiency. What causes failures?

In most cases failures have come about because of the lack of one or more of the following necessities: good administrative leadership, well trained specialists, adequate materials, cooperation among all persons concerned with the program.

New programs should be well planned, not attempted lightly after a seminar of a few weeks. Failures are expensive because the philosophy might be blamed rather than its implementation. Then thousands of blind children around the world will have no chance for an education.

In the first few years of the 19th century an Austrian educator, Johann Klein, made the first known attempt at systematic integration of blind pupils in normal schools. He spoke of it as a logical method of education for most blind students. It has taken more than a century and a half for his ideas to take root internationally. As late as the 1962 ICEBY Conference held in Hanover integrated education was discussed as a good thing but mainly for developing countries who supposedly would not be able to afford enough special schools. During this past decade integration has taken hold in the developed countries as well. The progress in the next ten years should make us all a little proud to meet together in 1982 at the next ICEBY Conference. It is possible that by that time we shall be ready to spend some hours discussing creative implementation of integration as the normal way of education for the majority of the blind children of this world.

